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ABSTRACT

This research explores possible connections between supervisory activity and the quality of the supervisory relationship. An effort was made to answer the following three questions: (1) What is the nature of the perceived interview behavior between supervisor and trainee? (2) What is the nature of the perceived supervisory relationship between practicum supervisors and trainees? and (3) What relationships, if any, accrue between perception of interview behavior and the perceptions of practicum supervisors and their respective counselor trainees? Subjects were four supervisors and 20 trainees. The procedure used to test the questions involved having each of the supervisors and their trainees view, code, and discuss trainee video tapes interview behavior. Supervisor-trainee perceptions of interview behavior were measured by the Counselor-Client Behavior Analysis System. The quality of the supervisory relationship was measured by the Barret Lennard Relationship Inventory. Findings include the following: (1) significant variability in interview analysis patterns was manifested between separate supervisory groups; and (2) various relationships accrued between perceptions of interview behavior and perceptions of practicum supervisors and their respective counselor trainees. (Author/RSM)

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PERCEPTIONS OF INTERVIEW BEHAVIOR AND RELATIONSHIPS IN COUNSELING SUPERVISION

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In many counselor education programs the practicum is intended to be the culminating experience toward which previous didactic courses are directed. While the practicum experience has been described as the central focus of counselor education programs, supervision has been identified as the major practicum activity and the greatest potential influence on counselor learning.

Studies on the nature of supervision, while reflecting divergent points of view, generally acknowledge two major supervisor-trainee interactive aspects, namely, the relationship and the didactic dimension (Patterson, 1964; Hansen, 1965; Lister, 1966). This duality of supervisory character has been aptly noted by Miller and Oetting (1966):

> Supervision is a relationship between two people, but one in which the student feels he is, in some respects, at the mercy of the supervisor. The student needs to feel that the supervisor values him as a person and as a counselor. He feels a strong need for active and continuing support. He also feels a need for structure. He wants the supervisor to be clear and specific, to evaluate the counseling effort, and to make recommendations that he can follow (p. 74).

Relatively little research, on the other hand, has investigated the specific components of the supervisory interaction (didactic-relationship dimensions) and their reciprocating effects, that is, the convergence of supervisory didactic elements as they interact within the climate of the supervisor-trainee relationship. Greater understanding of the assumed relationship between both components could result in more effective training techniques

and, ultimately, more effective counselors.

This research, then, was an attempt to further explore possible connections between supervisory activity, notably the interview analysis, and the quality of the supervisory relationship. Specifically, the problem of the study was stated in three questions which this investigation was designed to answer. These questions can be stated as follows: (1) What is the nature of the perceived interview behavior between supervisor and trainee? (2) What is the nature of the perceived supervisory relationship between practicum supervisors and trainees? (3) What relationships, if any, accrue between perceptions of interview behavior and perceptions of practicum supervisors and their respective counselor trainees?

This paper, then, will report in summary form some of the major research outcomes in counseling supervision during the 1968-1969 school year when the speaker was a practicum supervisor.

Method

The study was limited to four supervisors and twenty counselor trainees at a single university. Two supervisors and ten trainees (identified as Groups # 3 and # 4) were in a continuing (third quarter) NDEA Institute practicum program. The remaining groups (Groups # 1 and # 2) were in the initiating (first four weeks) half of their practicum sessions.

To analyze supervisor-trainee perceptions of interview behavior, a vital aspect of the study, a new interaction training/research device was

developed by this investigator. This instrument, called the Counselor-Client Behavior Analysis System (CCBA), was utilized during supervisory sessions.

Interview analysis was measured quantitatively by the degree of supervisor-trainee "agreement-disagreement" kinds of disagreements (resolved and unresolved), and direction of "shifts" (changes) ensuing from discussion and comparisons of perceptual observations of the trainees' behavior. Shifts meant that either supervisor, trainee, or both supervisor and trainee were changing their initial coding following interview discussion.

It was hoped that a measure of the degree of interview agreement might relate to supervisor-trainee learning. Kinds of disagreements (resolved and unresolved) and direction of shifts, on the other hand, were attempts to reflect some quality of the supervisory relationship either through one's willingness to compromise or through one's unwillingness to change his point of view.

To measure the quality of the supervisory relationship per se, the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory was utilized. The inventory is an objective measure of the "necessary and sufficient conditions" of the helping relationship as postulated by Rogers, namely, the level of positive regard, the degree of empathic understanding, the conditionality of regard, and the degree of congruence or genuineness. These four subtests together measure the total inventory of the interpersonal relationship as reflected by a total inventory score.

The procedures used to test these questions were to have each of the four supervisors, with five trainees apiece, view, code, and discuss trainee interview behavior from one twenty-to-thirty minute video taped interview. Comparisons of each others' independent codings were made and reasons for discrepancies were noted.

Immediately after interview analysis, the twenty trainees were asked to rate the supervisory relationship with their supervisors on the Relationship Inventory. Likewise, the supervisors rated the relationship they had with each trainee.

Finally, data from the CCBA Instrument and Relationship Inventory were prepared for analysis on a Fortran computer. Means, standard deviations, ranges, biserial correlations, and product moment correlations were conducted on all variables by each supervisory group, by initiating and continuing supervisory groups, and by all supervisory groups combined.

Results

Question # 1: What is the nature of the perceived interview behavior between supervisor and trainee?

On interview analysis patterns, significant variability was manifested between separate supervisory groups, but not between initiating and continuing members. That is, supervisory interview critique patterns between the four groups were significantly more dissimilar than alike; between initiating and continuing groups no significant differences were found. One of the primary findings in this investigation was the variability between separate supervisory

groups, a tendency also reported in the Walz and Roeber study (1962).

> Question # 2: What is the nature of the perceived supervisory relationship between practicum supervisors and trainees?

The nature of the perceived relationship between practicum supervisors and trainees revealed more favorable and more similar than dissimilar patterns. Supervisors in Groups # 1, # 3, and # 4 perceived the relationship in a more similar manner than Supervisor in Group # 2. Between individual trainees no significant differences were found. In other words, all trainees in this study tended to perceive the supervisory relationship in a similar manner. Also, trainees generally tended to perceive the supervisory relationship somewhat more favorably than their respective supervisors. A "halo effect" was cited as a possible explanation for this tendency. A similar trend has been reported by Stewart (1958), Reddy (1969), Walz and Johnston (1963), and Poling (1968).

If trainees appeared to act less critically and discriminately on perceptions of the supervisory relationship, it may be, as Gysbers has suggested (1964), that trainees were reacting to the amount of perceived supervisory threat. Perhaps the tendency to "play it safe" particularly in a systematic study such as the one they were exposed to, heightens the probability of safeguarding the ego. It may also be that an aspect of the "halo effect" relates to supervisory expectations by trainees. If expectations approximate the student-teacher role as noted by Gysbers and Johnston (1965), and Walz and Roeber (1962), then trainee contacts with the "more knowing person"

may be associated with higher perceptions of the supervisory relationship.

> Question # 3: What relationships, if any, accrue between perceptions of interview behavior and perceptions of practicum supervisors and their respective counselor trainees?

The following conclusions can be made on perceptions of interview behavior as related to perceptions of the supervisory relationship:

1. Between supervisors, supervisors in the continuing groups, that is Groups # 3 and # 4 (by each and by pairs), tended to function more similarly than supervisors in the initiating groups, Groups # 1 and # 2, in seven out of ten variables. It may be that these supervisors displayed similar patterns because of their close association as participants in a year-long NDEA Institute. It is also possible that they would have performed similarly in any kind of context or with any other kind of association.

2. Between trainees, trainees in Groups # 2 and # 4 (by each) tended to function more similarly than all other trainee combinations in seven out of ten variables.

3. Between trainees, trainees in Groups # 3 and # 4 (by each and by pairs) tended to function more similarly than other trainees in five out of ten variables.

4. The most consistent supervisory patterns between supervisors in Groups # 3 and # 4 (by each and by pairs) were as follows:

a. With fewer interview agreements more favorable supervisory relationships were perceived. Perhaps as members of the continuing group supervisors may have felt more secure and comfortable enough in their

supervisory relationship to disagree with trainees without fear of causing adverse effects.

b. With more "resolved" kinds of disagreements, more favorable supervisory relationships were perceived. Thus, supervisors, as members of the continuing group, seemed to associate "closure" on interview differences with more favorable perceptions of the supervisory relationship.

5. The most consistent supervisory patterns between trainees in Groups # 2, # 3, and # 4 (by each) were as follows:

With fewer "resolved" kinds of disagreements, more favorable supervisory relationships were perceived. Most trainees in this study apparently did not feel threatened by "open-ended" interview differences. Perhaps their favorable perceptions of the supervisory relationship (higher than all supervisors) contributed to this occurrence. Perhaps, too, as a consequence of their relationship, trainees felt that improved learning would be derived more from interview differences "unresolved" than "resolved." In any event, unresolved differences did not seem to pose any threat to their supervisory relationship.

6. Perceptions of the supervisory relationship (by each) for three out of the four supervisory groups were positively related. As a full sample, relationship scores were significantly and positively related ($p. = .05$).

7. Statistically significant correlations were obtained by the full sample on five variables:

a. As interview agreements increased, supervisors perceived

more favorable relationships.

b. As there were fewer "unresolved" kinds of interview differences, supervisors perceived more favorable relationships.

c. As "shifts to trainee" increased, supervisors perceived a more favorable relationship.

d. As there were fewer "resolved" kinds of interview differences, trainees perceived more favorable relationships.

e. As "shifts to supervisor" decreased, supervisors and trainees perceived a more favorable supervisory relationship.

Finally, a major finding of this study revealed that the CCBA system in Counselor Education is seen as potentially valuable in such areas as: (1) research; (2) improved communication between supervisors-trainees, supervisors-supervisors, counselors-clients, and supervisors-counselor trainees-clients; (3) didactic course work, such as counseling theory; (4) supervisory follow-up to assist on-going or continuing counselor education; (5) improved and systematic confrontation between supervisors and counselors; (6) supervisor and counselor screening; and (7) improved supervisory techniques, such as micro-counseling and simulation.

Implications

This study has demonstrated the utility of assessing interview and relationship qualities along the variables treated in this pilot study. While a longitudinal sampling of interview behavior would provide a better index of

candidate interview change, experience from this study indicates that small and random sampling from interviews provides a reasonably good index of the general characteristics of trainee behavioral patterns. It was found that within six to ten minutes of the interview (three to five coding pages), for example, trainee behavioral patterns became strikingly evident and stabilized. Thus successive ten minute samplings of interview behavior over the entire length of the practicum course could be collected and analyzed as a good index of counselor learning. Typical patterns of behavior might even be contrasted to samples taken from practicing counselors. Awareness of typical counseling behaviors in pre-service and on-the-job settings would add to our knowledge about the dynamics of human interaction. Process studies could then better define desired product outcomes.

A second implication of the study has suggested that the use of an interaction system as a training or research tool offers significant possibilities in that verbal-nonverbal sequential behavior over a period of successive interviews could be studied.

There are some distinct benefits in a CCBA type interaction system and it appears that there is a growing need for such a measuring approach (Mosher, 1967). It should be noted that, heretofore, supervisory investigation of counseling interview behavior has been restricted in four general ways. First, investigation has generally been derived from a study of fragmented elements of counseling behaviors obtained from written transcripts of interviews. Second, analysis has been mainly limited to verbal or talk responses. Third,

little attention has been given toward viewing, analyzing, and discussing behavior as it unfolds in sequence. Finally, instruments used to analyze counseling behaviors have often tended to be data collection devices of post process recall by counselors or counselees, rather than broad time samples of behavior in context. Thus, much of the counseling research to date has not placed behavior analysis in larger contexts nor in sequential order, both elements of which could contribute to a more realistic analysis of interview "happenings."

Furthermore, studies of nonverbal behaviors have mostly been investigated either apart from the counseling interview itself or out of context from their verbal counterpart. Technically, of course, video tape had not been readily available until recently as a means to analyze the configuration of verbal/nonverbal behavior.

The application of a verbal/nonverbal interaction training tool suggests a need for supervisors and trainees to explore with one another reasons for congruities or incongruities from their own perceptual frame of reference. This calls for the trainee and the supervisor to systematically become sensitive to themselves and to one another.

A third implication of the study would indicate that further investigation of counselor-client interviews perceptions of the interaction would be valuable.

The importance of longitudinal examinations of counselor-client interaction patterns has been poignantly described by Kell and Mueller (1966):

"The recurring theme is that everything that occurs in the counseling relationship is determined by the previous behavior of one or the other of the two interacting parties" (p. 18).

This study has also highlighted the importance of the supervisory relationship as a vital element influencing and being influenced by supervisory activity. It must be remembered that the supervisory relationship itself is a human interaction process and as such the dynamics of supervisor and supervisee are reciprocally affecting and changing each other. If the relationship is important to successful outcomes, it is necessary to examine carefully the conditions under which effective relationships are achieved in the process.

Noting the heterogeneity among supervisors in this study, a final implication highlights the importance of assessing supervisor and trainee performance individually as well as collectively. Reasons for these differences and the particular impact they have on trainees needs to be studied.

Another important step would be to study the outcomes of different supervisory behaviors on trainee counseling behavior. One would hope that such research would lead to improved supervisor selection, better supervision of counseling practicum, and consequently, better prepared counselors.

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